they want demonstration farms to be brought to their very doors. They think it is too much trouble to go a little way to study the working of a farm. Your mention of Kottayam illustrates the fact that there is no such farm in the Kottayam District. I shall take up that question with the Director of Agriculture and see whether the establishment of one will stimulate the cultivators and consider for what locality and for what particular form of cultivation it will be necessary.

The Assembly adjourned for lunch at 2 P. M. and re-assembled at 3 P. M.

37. Suggestions for the improvement of paddy cultivation in Travancore.

MR. P. K. VELAPPAN NAIR (*Member, Vaikom taluk*) said that it was well-known that Travancore was an agricultural country. The majority of the population were agriculturists. The chief products were paddy, cocoanut, tapioca, pepper, rubber, ginger, and cardamom. Of these, all products except paddy were exported in large quantities to foreign countries. But the paddy produced was not enough even for local consumption.

It was the duty of the Agricultural Department to persuade and stimulate people to improve bad paddy lands. A good portion of Travancore paddy lands were peat lands. The cultivation of these lands had for several reasons become very unprofitable. If Government applied themselves to the improvement of these lands, they could achieve a good deal.

In the first place, *kari* and *punja* lands should not be allowed to lie under water as at present for ten months in the year. Owing to the submergence of the lands in salt water during the hot season, the soil became heated. No acids could thus be formed in the soil which consequently lost its fertility. In order to prevent this evil, permanent bunds should be put up on the banks of rivers and of backwaters. The owners of paddy fields should also be required to maintain the bunds of the fields in good condition. Locks and bunds should also be constructed in the canals and water-ways used for irrigation. This would help to keep off water from the lands which could become dry in the hot season. The cultivators by themselves were helpless in this matter. If they put up bunds, others would cut them open. There was also another difficulty. The right of fishing in some of the channels had been given by Government to contractors. These contractors would not allow private persons to put up bunds in the channels. The Agricultural Department should therefore turn its attention to these matters. If necessary the staff of the department could be strengthened further for this purpose.

Agricultural *samajams* should be established in each pakuthi on the model of co-operative societies. There should be a union of these *samajams* in each taluk. Representatives of the unions should form an agricultural *samajam* under the Director of Agriculture. The

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Director would thus be in a position to get into touch with the agricultural needs of each pakuthi. The scheme would probably involve no additional expenditure to the department. Minor irrigation works could also be executed in consultation with these associations.

The system of registering for private occupation small channels which might be utilised for agricultural purposes should be stopped. No channels or channel-banks should be registered except in consultation with the Agricultural Department. Ordinarily it was the public Works Department whom Government consulted in such matters. But that was not enough.

In addition to conserving the existing channels, new channels should be opened by Government every year. There was no objection to collecting some kind of cess from the people for the purpose. It was far better than giving 316 lakhs of rupees annually to foreigners.

As in Porakad model farms should be opened in each pakuthi abounding in *kari* lands and the profitableness of cultivating the lands should be demonstrated to the people. Recurring failures of crops in *kari* lands tended to impair the confidence of the people in *kari* cultivation. Demonstration farms would furnish the incentive necessary to overcome this loss of confidence.

The results of the researches and experiments made by the Agricultural Department should be brought home to the masses. The economic journal had but a limited circulation. The circulation of the journal should be increased, or the Agricultural Department should give due publicity to the results of their researches by means of small pamphlets. This would be an effective means of educating the conservative agriculturist in the use of artificial manures and new types of implements.

People should be induced to apply artificial manure on *kari* lands. Manures and seeds should also be sold to the people for moderate prices. Arrangements should be made for having manure and seed depots in all parts of every taluk, at any rate in one place in each taluk.

Nobody in the State paid any attention to the welfare of cattle. This was one of the reasons for the failure of cultivation. Grants-in-aid were now being issued to persons who kept stud bulls. This was not enough. Arrangements should be made for the department keeping a stud bull in each taluk, which should be placed free at the disposal of the public.

The economic condition of the cultivating ryots was another matter to which Government should pay attention. Many people were too poor to command any of the modern facilities for cultivation. The existing system of agricultural loans needed reform. The allotments for each taluk should be enhanced. The terms of the loans should be extended. The nature of the works on which the money was spent and the accounts of the expenditure should be strictly scrutinised. Land mortgage banks would go a long way towards helping poor ryots in this matter.

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In regard to none of these proposals, Government should take shelter under want of funds or any such excuse. If they could spend 30 or 40 lakhs of rupees on education and public works, they should surely make up their mind to spend an equally good amount on agriculture which for the majority of the population was the primary means of earning their livelihood. Travancoreans should in short be enabled to hold a position in which they would never have to bend their knees before their "Uncles" in Burma.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Velappan Nair, I am very glad that you have given serious thought to the question of Travancore's capacity to be self-supporting in the matter of its main staple food. It was with the express purpose of drawing serious attention to this need, that I dwelt upon the matter in my address to the Assembly and I hope every member in this Assembly will interest himself in the subject and also do what he can for propaganda work—all such work being directed with one great object, the better, the more intensive cultivation of paddy so that Travancore can produce a higher proportion of rice than she now produces; and when that point is achieved she may be able to depend less upon Burma and Indo-China, countries which you describe as the "Uncles of Travancore".

You suggest the formation of *samajams* to work for increased rice production in the country. I just consulted Dr. Kunjan Pillai, the Director of Agriculture, and he tells me that some years ago he made an attempt to get such *samajams* working. But it was a forlorn hope for him because the *samajams* came to be composed of Vakils and school masters and not of the agriculturists and therefore those *samajams* were foredoomed to failure. It is only those who are actually working upon the land who can instil active interest in the matter of better cultivation. Dr. Kunjan Pillai has assured me that if genuine agriculturists would come forward he would collaborate with them with enthusiasm and do the best extent possible. I do not know whether you are an agriculturist, or a farmer or a landholder. If you happen to be any such, I hope you will be able to form *samajams*.

You touched upon the subject of land mortgage banks. They are easy things to establish if you have large finance. If you are in touch with English politics, you will know that the Agricultural Credits Act has only just been passed through Parliament so as to give farmers in England long term credits for improving or buying land.

I do not think there are many more points that I need specifically touch upon except that all of them will be carefully considered by Dr. Kunjan Pillai who will endeavour to carry out some of the things urged in your representation.

MEMBER: The Travancore ryots have not sufficient education to embark upon more intensive cultivation or to organise themselves.

DEWAN: Mr. Velappan Nair says here that in Travancore agriculturists have not reached that high standard of cultural education which will enable them to cultivate the land better. He therefore asks

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that the Director of Agriculture should make one more effort to improve agriculture through *samajams* presumably not composed of agriculturists since these men are, according to Mr. Velappan Nair, so far behind in education and culture. I shall commend your remarks, Mr. Velappan Nair, to the attention of the Director of Agriculture.

38. Fish curing in the coast villages.

MR. M. P. MUTHIA PILLAI (*Member, Nominated*) said that the Catholic Arasars were a sea-faring community and their hereditary profession was catching fish in the sea. They supplied one of the indispensable articles of food for over 95 per cent of the population of Travancore. Now it was well known that fish, as an article of food, was easily perishable and became positively injurious and dangerous to public health, if it was not properly cured. But the fishermen in South Travancore were using the most primitive methods of curing fish except perhaps in a few places, where after the inauguration of the Fisheries Department more scientific methods were employed.

With a view to supplying good fish to the public, Government were maintaining some fish-curing yards. They had till now opened only 10 yards, of which 7 were located in the Trivandrum Division with a coast line of over 75 miles from Cape Comorin to Edava. This worked out only at the rate of one yard for 11 miles, or one yard for 6 fishing villages. These villages were proverbially very poor and were devoid of any kind of communication whether by roads or by canals. The fisherfolk in these places had to carry fish in head-loads to distant markets. They had to do this every day. Left without any other means of livelihood and accustommed to a hand to mouth living, they sold away all the fish they caught; they seldom took the fish to the fish-curing yards or got them cured well.

If Government really wanted to see good fish supplied to the public, they should open more fish curing yards in the coast villages in the Southern Division. The opening of more yards was necessary as much in the interests of the fisher-folk themselves as of the general public who used fish as an article of food. Necessary rules should also be passed by Government in order to prohibit badly cured fish being sold as an article of food. It might even be made obligatory on the part of the fisherfolk to cure their fish in approved fish-curing yards.

But it was not the opening of more fish-curing yards that was alone necessary for effectively preventing the sale of bad fish. The material required for curing had also to be taken into account. Till about three years ago, salt for curing fish was being issued to fishermen at the rate of As. 14 per maund, as it was even now being done in British India. But three years ago, Government raised the price of salt all on a sudden to B. Re. 1-8-0 per maund, which was almost double the former rate. Unless the old rate of As. 14 was restored, it would not be worth while for the fishermen to make use of the fish-curing yards, which were sure to remain unused as at present. The statistics of the quantity of fish cured in some of the yards during the past few years would show how these yards were losing in popularity.

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